19: Marshall M-6 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
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no reference to the object of the call. This whole procedure illustrates not only a Karen, but also an Oriental, trait of character. The Oriental deals in indirect methods, rather than run the risk of saying something disagreeable. 584

Realizing that his mission is not in vain, the intermediary enters the house of the prospective bride's parents in joyous mood, fairly shouting the Karen version of "tra-la-la," which is "traw-le, wa-le, ho-o-o." They sit down and discuss the matter. Then the parents kill a fowl or a pig, and the guest stays for dinner in token that the bargain is sealed. After the date for the wedding-feast has been set, the intermediary returns to the young man's family and reports his success. As a rule the time of the feast is fixed by the maiden's parents, but it is sometimes determined by the youth's family.

The only month that is tabu for wedding-feasts is "La plü" (December). This is the month when the moon is most often eclipsed (swallowed by the dogs). To many the month seems as though it were killed and is, therefore, regarded as inauspicious for new life. Others say that it is the month when neither birds nor animals mate, and that it is unwise for men to undertake to start a new household. The favorite months for marriages are March and April in the dry season, because the harvest is past, the weather is good, and there is plenty to eat and drink. The date of the wedding must fall during the waxing of the moon, which augurs an increasing family. This important point being settled, the prospective bride busies herself less with the preparation of her own trousseau than with the weaving of a set of new garments for her future husband, including a white turban, a white blanket with a red stripe running through it lengthwise, and, in the olden days, a "hse plo" or single smock. The maiden's family prepare the rice, fish-paste, pork, and liquor for the feast. The prospective groom has only to make for himself a horn to be blown at the festivities. On the plains and in those places in the hills where each family has its separate house, a booth or "k'la pyeh" is built close at hand for the wedding-feasts.[4] This structure must be so placed as to have its entrance towards the tail of the "p'yo" or great dragon of the Karens. Not long ago I saw such a booth, which was enclosed on three sides and had a small open entrance to the east. The south side was entirely open. Access to the structure was had 585 787 808 292 534 585 343

[4] This booth is often called a "zayat." The name, "k'la pyeh," is from the Burmese. Perhaps the booth itself is of Burmese origin, but I do not know.

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through the east door and exit from the south side. The dragon was supposed at the time to be lying with its head to the west and its tail to the east.

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With the near approach of the wedding-day the friends of the groom gather at his village, blowing horns, beating on gongs and drums, striking cymbals, and chanting "htaa." Early on the wedding-morn every one is astir. The rice is cooked and eaten by sunrise and, to an accompaniment of all the noisy instruments and with shouting and singing, the party sets forth. In the olden days, when the precepts of the elders were strictly observed, there was much drinking of liquor and boisterous sport on such occasions, but withal a certain decorum was not altogether lacking by reason of the halting of the procession from stage to stage and the reciting of appropriate verses. As the party is ready to leave the village they sing:

"To-day is a good day.
We shall see a maiden as fair as cotton-wool.
This is indeed a good day.
We shall behold one as fair as a cotton boll."

On setting forth, they do not overlook the unmarried girls of the village:

"Here you have not loved me.
Listen to my wedding-horns blowing yonder.
Remain here. You have not esteemed me.
Watch us depart with our horns blowing."

On the journey they sing:

"The wedding is timed at the coming of the rats.
Unless death intrudes, we shall prosper.
The marriage takes place when the rodents are here.
Unless death comes, we shall work and be happy." [5]

As they approach the bride's village a party greets them:

"The 'the kaw' blossoms in the dark of the moon.
The moon waxes and wanes.
The 'the kaw' blossoms in the full of the moon.
The moon increases and declines." [6]

The above stanza refers to the maidens, still unmarried, who are waiting from one moon to the next. The groom replies:

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[5] The years of full crops always bring a plague of rats in the hills. Thus, the time of rats is a time of prosperity.

[6] This verse, recited by the villagers, refers to the girls who have not yet married and are still waiting from one moon to the next.

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"The mountains are great and lofty.
My desire brought me, panting.
Reeking with sweat on the towering hills,
My passion brought me, leaping and bounding.
I was wretched. I only trusted.
Whether good or bad the omens, come I would."

The whole company now enters the village, and its members are offered drink. (See page 185). Meanwhile, the young men shout:

"You have expected a company.
Can you feast such a company as we?
You invited a crowd.
Can you spread a feast for all of us?"

The hosts disclaim making any preparation for the company:

"There is nothing to eat.
Let us resort together to the betel-box.
As yet we have nothing else.
Let us partake from the bamboo betel-box."

But the guests will not be satisfied with betel chewing only:

"Boil for us. Brew our drink.
Feed us the white progeny of the pot.[7]
The hand raises food and drink,
And the heart is satisfied."

The women now insist that with little or no paddy they can do nothing:

"Have you not looked at the supply of paddy?
We women can prepare neither rice nor liquor.
Have you not seen the paddy?
We can neither cook rice nor brew liquor."

But the young men do not relax their demands:

"Bring out your distilling pipe.
That you have none, we do not believe.
Come prod us with your distilling tube.
That you lack one, we are not convinced."

At length, the women consent to supply what they have:

"We have nothing worth bringing to serve you,
But will fetch it, as ordered, though we suffer."

In some instances the intermediary acts as master of ceremonies for the young men, although they may choose another elder to serve as their leader. In Shwegyin, when the wedding party is about half-way to the village of the prospective bride, the elders

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[7] This refers to the white kernels of the cooked rice, which are often spoken of as the "children of the pot."

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585 273 halt the young men and instruct them in the proprieties of the approaching occasion, reminding them that they are going to a strange village where they will be entertained as guests. The hosts will serve them with rice and spirits. The elders remind them that the rice liquor that will be provided has been twice boiled and would intoxicate a horse or an elephant. They, therefore, advise moderation, telling them also not to hear any evil that may be spoken of them, to remain seated though others stand, to continue reclining though others sit up, to answer mildly though others speak roughly, and not to strike back should others slap them in the face. The elders require the company to say definitely that they will remember their advice, whereupon each one breaks a twig from a tree to be placed in a pile on the ground in token of the promise of all to conduct themselves properly and keep the peace.

585 A few years ago I visited a village in the Pegu Yomas at the time of a wedding. In the room of the bride's family they were preparing quantities of rice and curries. However, no liquor was in evidence. The bride herself was busy carrying water almost to the moment that the horns sounded at the village gate. The new clothing for the groom was resting upon the beam over the door. Now and again the horns and gongs could be heard in the distance. A party arriving from a village to the north waited outside the gate, in order to avoid the impropriety of preceding the groom's party, which was coming from across the valley, as the sounds reaching us from time to time from that direction informed us. As the groom's retinue ascended the hill, the waiting delegation hailed them with the din of their instruments, the other crowd giving vent in response with a volume of noise that showed them to be still unexhausted by the ascending of the hill. Brief intervals of silence followed by intermittent shouts and blasts of the horns indicated that the groom and his party were being welcomed by the elders.

585 292 As the procession again moved forward, we could catch glimpses of the red-bordered smocks or "hse plos" of the men. On their nearer approach we could see the elders in the lead, followed by the married women and after them the groom attended by his party of young men. They now advanced along the narrow paths by twos and threes with their arms around each other, jumping and frolicing as they came. The bright colors of their costumes were accentuated by the bright red bags slung over their shoulders and the long tassels hanging from these. The large silver earrings adorned the lobes of their ears, which were further decorated by

19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1918) 1922 AP1 Burma
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A Bridegroom's Company Entering the Bride's Village
Notice the young woman leaving the house as they are entering it.

The Wedding Party
They are keeping still for a few minutes to have their photograph taken

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585 bits of red and yellow wool or by beads. The women wore heavily
292 beaded smocks above their richly colored skirts, numerous chains of silver and glass beads, and red and white turbans. Meanwhile, the horns were emitting alternate short and long tones of reedy timbre. When the guests began to gather at the foot of the ladder, a boy was there with a jar of water from which he sprinkled the feet of each one as he ascended into the house. Shouts of "traw le-o, traw le-o" mingled with the notes of the horns as the groom advanced to the doorway of his bride's parents. Here he was met by two young men, neither of whom had lost a parent (such is the requirement of the occasion), who poured the contents of two bamboo water joints over him, completely drenching him. They then assisted him to don the new garments provided for him by his betrothed.[6] The din produced by the merry-makers by no means ceased when they had entered the house. Indeed, it only seemed to increase, being punctuated now and then with a shout which served as a signal for the crowd to jump up and down on the plain bamboo floor, shaking the whole building until it seemed ready to collapse.

585 Meanwhile, the bride had long since retired into obscurity in a rear room. Any glimpse of her called forth all the noise the crowd was capable of. In Karen weddings, as in most Oriental nuptials, the bride keeps herself in the background as much as possible. I once asked to see the bride at a wedding on the plains and was told that she was back in the darkest part of the room. I remember that I gazed intently, but was not able to discern her.

The groom in his wedding-array occupied himself in cutting in two-yard lengths a long piece of white muslin and distributing these for turbans to the male relatives of the bride. On request the chief of the village permitted the young men to visit the different rooms of the village-house, for the purpose of merry-making under such restrictions as he saw fit to impose. After that they quieted down for the remainder of the day, spending most of their time in chewing betel, telling stories, and amusing themselves in other ways. Many of them went apart into a room to sleep, having had little rest the night before.

[562] When a wedding is about to take place in a village nearly all the young women of the place disappear, leaving the day before the event for a visit to another village or retiring into the jungle. The

[6] Dr. Mason tells us that it was the custom for the bride to be conducted to the groom's house and to be there drenched with water: *Journal, Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1865.

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bolder ones may remain, but spend their time under the houses or in the deeper shadows.

After darkness has come on and the party has finished the evening meal, the young men make the round of the village, hunting for any of the girls who have had the temerity to remain. Those who are caught are subjected to good-natured badgering and perhaps to pretended abduction. Shouting, the noise of the instruments, and the slaps on the floor and sides of the house with bamboos split at one end into six or eight strips, accompany this hunt for the maidens. Such sport does not degenerate into ill-treatment of the girls, if they are caught, even though the men have indulged in liquor; but the fun is certain to be kept up all night, and sometimes the scant partitions between the living-rooms of the village families are removed, with the permission of the chief, to enable the visitors to circulate the more freely throughout the village-house.

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Among the Shwegin Karen a vestige of wife-purchase appears to have survived. I am told that as night comes on the intermediary and the visiting elders place a jacket and skirt on a winnowing-tray and carry them to the parents of the bride as "ta k'ner" or "things that will win." The local elders, who are present with the parents, decline to accept the garments as being of too little value. The intermediary retires to return with some added articles—a headdress, bracelets, and beads. The parents and village elders are not yet satisfied, and the intermediary has to add a silver head-band, earrings, and a lump of silver to the things on his tray, before he is regarded as offering a sufficient price. A bottle of liquor is now brought out and drunk by way of sealing the bargain, and the village elders announce that "the price is paid." Among these same people it is customary for the elders, on the morning of the second day of the wedding-feasts, to send the bridegroom and his young men out on a hunt. The game taken must be brought back by the groom on his own shoulders and carried by him to the house of the bride. This hunt is his last with his fellows and his first foraging expedition for the household he is establishing.

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On the last evening of the feasts a ceremony used to be performed that is rarely seen nowadays. I have been informed that it was the main part of the marriage-feasts, signifying the uniting of husband and wife. Its name was "Hpo nya mo, hpo nya pa," and meant "Children tease mother; children tease father." For this ceremony the bride prepared a cock and a hen, which were boiled whole, and she also cooked a pot of rice. These were placed in the

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inner room of the house. Thither the groom was escorted to his bride in the evening by his attendants, who chanted:

"Go, escort the husband to the maiden.
The mother looks on with smiles.
The wild buffalo shall enter.[9]
Tell the father to fasten the door.
Lead the young man to her room.
Let no one molest him.
Take in the youth.
Leave him undisturbed."

After the groom had seated himself near his bride, the rice and fowls were set before them. Each in turn took sparingly of the food, while the company looked on until the bride raised a morsel to her lips, when they shouted "Hpo nya mo! Hpo nya pa!" and began to scramble for the chickens, which they pulled to pieces and threw at the women. The latter returned the volley with shouts of "Hpo nya mo! Hyo nya ma!" This "teasing" of the future parents and throwing scraps of chicken at one another is said to have betokened the mutual expression of good wishes for increasing families for all those participating in the ceremony. The groom was then escorted back to the booth or the guest-room, where he spent the night with his friends.

Returning from our digressions in the preceding three paragraphs, the villagers early on the second morning of the wedding ceremonies prepare a feast of rice and chicken curry for their guests. Not less than two young roosters or two pullets are used in the preparation of this final feast, every part of the fowls being cooked, even the intestines, which have been carefully cleaned. Bits of stewed plantain stalks are included in the dish, inasmuch as the prolific nature of this plant is supposed to be communicated to those partaking of it, thus assuring the large families desired. A joint of bamboo full of liquor is also brought out. The bride and groom must then dip their fingers into the liquor and the food, while calling out "Pru-r-r k'la, heh ke" ("Pru-r-r k'la, come back"), two or three times. The elders now shout: "This day you twain, husband and wife, have become one spirit. May God take care of you. May the Just One watch over you. May the powerful Thi Hko Mü Xa (Lord of the demons) shield you. May you have strength to work and gain your livelihood. May you sleep in peace and eat the fruits of the land. May you have long life, ten children, and one hundred grandchildren." The elders next ad-

[9] A nickname for the intermediary.

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dress the "k'la," as follows: "Pru-r-r k'la, return, return. Do not stay in the jungle. Behold your place here. Do not leave it. Go not away. Look at your own room. See your own place." A morsel of the rice, together with the heart and lungs of the fowls, is then placed upon the heads of the bridal pair, and the guests proceed to eat the remainder of the feast, finishing it before sunrise.

Thus far the intermediary has passed through the marriage celebration with the consideration on all hands belonging to one who has conducted successfully the negotiations between the parents of the groom and those of the bride. He has been the groom's personal attendant, has carried his principal's few worldly goods to the bride's house for, as among the ancient Hebrews, the young man leaves his father and mother to become a member of his wife's family. But now the intermediary finds himself suddenly deprived of his position of respect and becomes the butt of the night's fun. The foot of a pig killed for the feast is tied about his neck with a rattan, and its head is set upon a post of the house for him to bark at for the sport of the guests.[10] If he could lift the head down from the post, it became his possession. His success in accomplishing this was said to symbolize his skill in finding a suitable wife for his friend, which was likened to the scent of the old Karen hunting dogs ("htwi maw seh") in the chase. The guests now take their departure for their several villages, having spent two days, if not more as sometimes happens, at the celebration. No one whose feet were sprinkled on his arrival, is allowed to leave until the celebration is over.

After the departure of the guests, the intermediary remarks to the bride's parents: "I have brought you a son. Cherish him. If you have aught to say against him, speak it out now." On receiving a negative reply he continues: "I have given him into your hands. I have done my duty, and my task is finished." One of the village elders tells the intermediary that after seven days he will be free from blame in case anything evil transpires concerning the groom. The bride's parents present him with a pair of fowls for his services, which he carries home and keeps, unless by reason of illness he must sacrifice them to recall his wandering "k'la."

The groom lingers about the village during the day after the guests have gone and in the evening is escorted by some of the elders to the bride's room. Formerly in some localities it was cus-

[10] In some places the pig's head was hung about the intermediary's neck, and he went about barking at one or another of the company, as the spirit moved.

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385 tomary to sprinkle the bridal floor with rice to give the pair a fruitful married life. Possibly the showering of rice on newly married couples in the West had originally a similar significance. However, I have been told that in the olden times couples often refrained from living together for months or even a year or two after their marriage.

585 784 787 Many tabus were formerly observed by parties going to a wedding. If they heard of a death, passed a funeral, or came into contact with anything connected with a burial, the intermediary at once halted his companions and directed them to recall their "k'las." If a snake crossed their path, he stopped them and addressed the reptile: "You follow your path, and we will follow ours. Our way is short and pleasant. Yours is long and evil." If they happened to hear the call of the red-headed woodpecker, which is considered a bird of ill-omen, he would cry out: "You may be sick and die. It is nothing to us. Let the white ginger burn you." If they came upon a dead wild animal, the intermediary reminded the company that death, having taken its victim, would not touch them. Chancing to meet another wedding party, the two groups exchanged the greeting: "May you be free from all evil, and may you have peace." If either company had liquor with them, they all drank together.

Certain tabus made it necessary for the whole party to sit down where they were and wait until they believed the danger was past. They did this when they heard the call of the plover, the cry of the barking-deer, the "tauke te" of the lizard, or the scream of the woodpecker. When about to renew their journey after an interruption of this kind, they pretended to spit something out of their mouths, saying: "Let all evil remain on you." A sneeze would halt the entire retinue until the leader was assured that no more sneezes were to follow.

585 591 According to modern usage the groom is supposed to remain in his wife's house three, seven, or any other number of days required by her parents. After the specified interval has elapsed, he is free to go about as he pleases; but he seldom returns to his own village, except for a brief visit. The general custom is for the husband to settle down with his parents-in-law, a practice that looks much like a survival from the matriarchal stage of the Karen's past.

586 Should the marriage prove unsatisfactory to the wife or her parents and they wish to sever the connection, they must purchase their release by paying the husband an ox or one hundred rupees.

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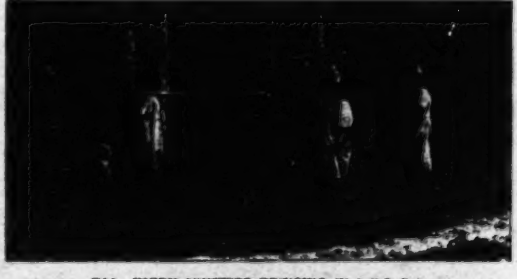
343. KAREN SPRING-SPEAR (DYAN.)

making traps and snares for animals, whose habits they observe closely, and whose calls they mimic. Squirrels are their principal quarry. For deer they set a spring-spear called *dyan* at a salt-lick. This is a source of danger to travellers, who have to be on their guard for the warning sign set at the approaches to the *dyan*. They keep common wild cocks and pheasant cocks, as well as doves, for decoys. The decoy-cock is tied by the leg to a post in the centre of a circle of snares; when a wild bird hears him crow and comes to fight he is caught. [857] The chief game of Karén children is transfixing bamboo hoops as they bound past, a practice for spearing running game. [411] The Karéns use a cross-bow (No. 204), with simple, and occasionally also with poisoned arrows. [412] All the Karén utensils are of home manufacture, with the significant exception of the *dá* and axe, their chief implements, which are made by Shans and Burmans. [439] They even make rough pottery when at a distance from the market. The [286] women spin, dye, and weave their own yarn; but they are beginning to use the ready-dyed yarn that is imported. Every member of a Karén household labours for the common fund. 585 Young Karéns do not marry till mature—twenty to twenty-four. Marriages are arranged by the elders; but, if a pair mate of their own choice, the lad has to give a buffalo or its value to the girl's parents. Unlike the marriages of the civilised races of the country, the Karén marriage is a great festivity. 291 Karén unmarried women wear only a [562] long smock (*thindding*) of plain white. [224] Married women wear a blue embroidered smock over a figured loincloth. 000 Men and women



344. KAREN HUNTERS BRINGING IN WILD PIG.